



EVALUATION OF ECA'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: E-Teacher Scholarship Program Key Findings

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Enhancing English language teaching and learning overseas is central to the mandate of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to increase understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. English language programming results in expanded educational and economic opportunities for underserved communities, builds educational capacity, and increases opportunities for collaboration and innovation among American citizens, organizations and businesses overseas. The E-Teacher Scholarship Program, part of ECA's suite of English language programs, offers English teaching professionals around the world the opportunity to participate in a distance-learning program that introduces the most recent language teaching methods and techniques in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) field.

The following are highlights from a global evaluation of the E-Teacher Program funded by ECA and released in 2015:

- The E-Teacher program provides professional development to working English teaching professionals around the globe with limited training opportunities. For example, 91 percent of E-Teacher participants responding to the evaluation's survey said the course gave them access to experts in their field which they would not have had otherwise.

This program is an excellent alternative for many teachers from around the world that are unable to attend prestigious universities, and especially so for Cuban teachers that have very limited access to the development of language teaching.
—Vocational college instructor, Cuba

- The E-Teacher program connects English teaching professionals with other English language professionals around the world. Specifically, 98 percent of respondents felt more connected to the global EFL community after the program.
- E-Teacher participants reported that they had changed their teaching practices as a result of the program, which in turn improved their students' confidence and interest in English. Nine in ten E-Teacher respondents reported that their students had become more active learners and had an increased interest in learning English, and 82% believed they had built their students' conversation skills.
- The vast majority of survey respondents reported that their E-Teacher course participation had directly led them to make multiple changes at their institutions. These included introducing new teaching practices (90 percent); improving testing and assessment (83 percent); teaching new courses on the subject of their E-Teacher course (79 percent); and introducing more online resources (79 percent) into existing courses.
- E-Teacher participants reported program impacts within their broader communities and at the national level.

[What I learned in] the E-Teacher [course] was cascaded to all the English language teachers/United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools in Jordan (172 schools) at the time, and I was leading on that as my capacity of being school supervisor at the time; all the ideas, strategies and thoughts learned from E-Teacher were employed in the educational reform that UNRWA was implementing, and I took the part of planning how to change the focus of teaching to become student-centered.

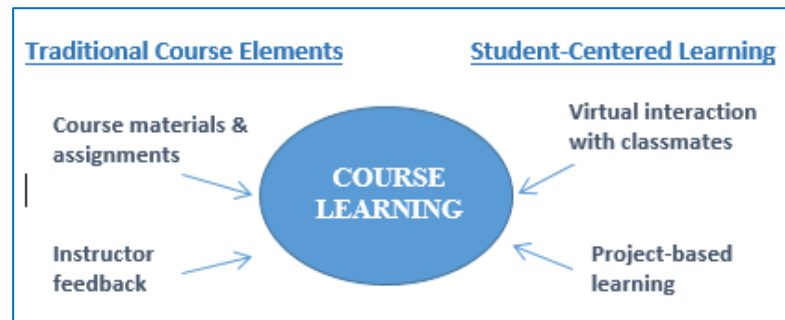
—Emergency education officer, Jordan



PROGRAM AND EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The E-Teacher Scholarship Program offers participants a 10-week graduate-level online professional development course led by an instructor at a U.S. university,¹ at no cost to the participant. The E-Teacher course design integrates traditional learning elements—such as reading and writing assignments—into a highly interactive, student-centered virtual classroom, where participants take primary responsibility for their own learning and the instructor serves as a facilitator.

Figure 1. E-Teacher Course Design



*In project-based or task-based learning, students master course material through activities in which they apply the concepts taught.

In 2011, EurekaFacts, LLC, was contracted to conduct an evaluation of the E-Teacher Program in order to assess program impacts in four general areas:

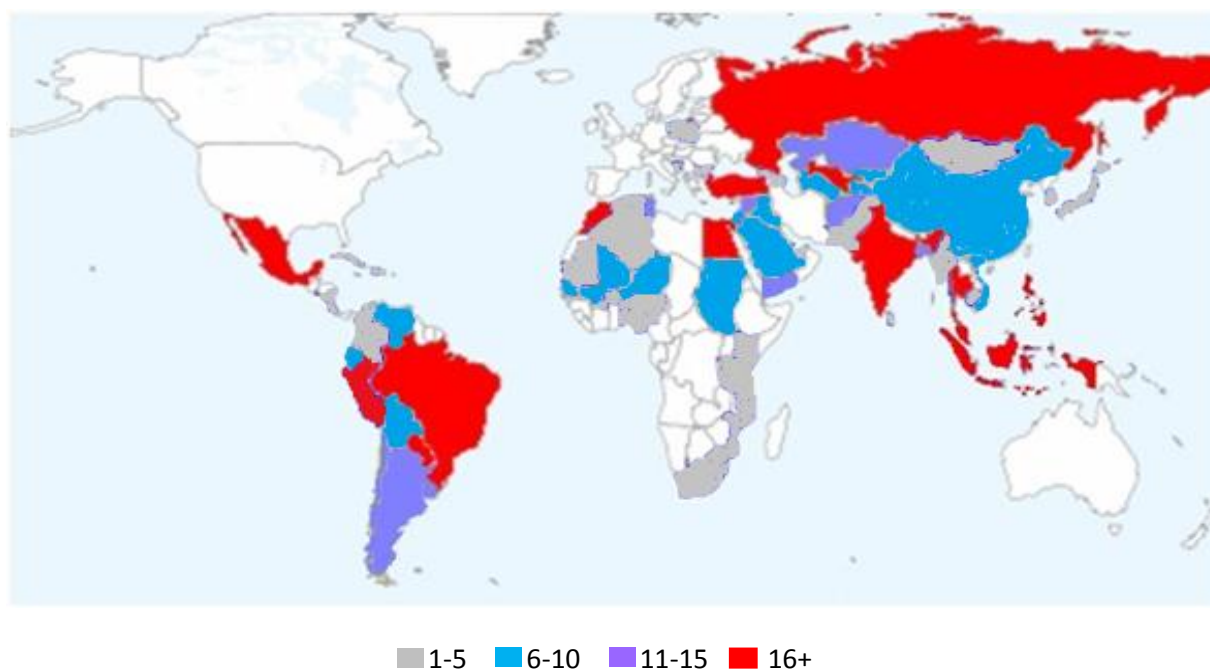
- ***Participants' professional knowledge, expertise and development.*** What knowledge/skills have participants gained? Has the program provided them with unique opportunities? How have they sought to expand knowledge or improve practice since taking the course?
- ***Participants' English language teaching practices.*** How have participants applied what they learned in their classes? Has this led to changes in courses that they teach?
- ***Participants' home institutions.*** How have participants shared their learning with colleagues and/or applied it at their institutions? What have been the impacts on students, institutional curricula and/or teaching methods?
- ***Linkages.*** How have participants continued to engage with their peers/virtual communities?

¹ During the evaluation period (2004–09), E-Teacher courses were offered by five U.S. universities; currently, all courses are offered by the University of Oregon only.

PROGRAM REACH

During the participation period covered by this evaluation (2004–09), a total of 696 E-Teacher participants residing in 78 countries/territories completed at least one E-Teacher course, as illustrated in Figure 2.²

Figure 2. Numbers of E-Teacher Participants per Country, 2004–09



DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

The evaluation used a mixed-method data collection strategy to evaluate the E-Teacher Program, which included the following components:

- **Online Survey:** In the fall of 2012, the evaluation team conducted an online survey of participants, which collected data from 367 of the 696 participants who had completed at least one course between 2004 and 2009. This represented a response rate of 53%.
- **Qualitative Fieldwork:** In 2011 and 2012, the evaluation team traveled to Chile, Russia, Thailand, and Turkey to conduct interviews with 22 participants as well as Ministry of Education officials and U.S. Post/Embassy English language programming staff.

² There was no country data for 27 of the 696 E-teachers who completed a course. Thus, the map and country/territory count are based on the 669 E-teachers for which data was available. Also, the figure of 696 represents only those participants who completed a course; approximately 1,000 E-Teacher scholarships were awarded, but the remaining participants did not complete the course.

A 21ST CENTURY PROGRAM: VIRTUAL TRAINING FOR GLOBAL ENGLISH TEACHING PROFESSIONALS

The virtual format of the E-Teacher Program makes advanced EFL training accessible to working English teaching professionals anywhere in the world.

E-Teacher Courses Fill a Void in Advanced EFL Training. The most common motivation for taking an E-Teacher course (identified by 48 percent of respondents) is to learn more about one's area of specialization within the EFL field. As such, the E-Teacher participants surveyed most commonly took advanced courses or those on teaching English to specific audiences, rather than introductory course offerings, such as online skills.³ Respondents explained that these specialized courses fill a void in the EFL pedagogical training available locally.

Figure 3. E-Teacher Courses Most Commonly Taken by Survey Respondents, 2004–09*

E-Teacher Course	Type	Percentage [†]
Critical Thinking in the EFL Curriculum	Advanced	40%
Teaching English to Young Learners	Teaching to Specific Audiences	22%
EFL Assessment	Advanced	21%
English for Business	Teaching to Specific Audiences	16%
English for Law	Teaching to Specific Audiences	5%

Total N=367

*Courses taken by less than 5 percent of respondents are not listed.

[†]Figures represent the percentage of respondents who completed each course; multiple responses were allowed.

Online Format Increases Accessibility

- ***Global reach.*** The virtual format makes the E-Teacher Program accessible to educators who live far from major cities where professional development activities are usually held.
- ***Flexible schedule convenient for working professionals.*** The asynchronous course format⁴ makes it possible for working English language educators to participate without taking time off from work. In fact, 9 in 10 E-Teacher survey respondents agreed that the online format was a “convenient alternative” to in-person training and considered the flexible schedule a highly valuable aspect of the program (92 percent and 89 percent, respectively).
- ***Opportunity to study at a U.S. university.*** The virtual format allows participants to virtually “attend” a U.S. university course without leaving home, thus making such courses accessible to a vast pool of global professionals who are not able to physically come to the United States. The vast majority (86 percent) of respondents identified this aspect of the program as highly valuable.

³ Some course titles have changed since the evaluation period. Also, the courses English for Business and English for Law are no longer offered; now, these topics are subsumed within the course titled English for Specific Purposes.

⁴ In an asynchronous course, participants may log on to the virtual classroom—to read and post comments in online discussions, or to complete other class activities—at different times.

DIRECT BENEFITS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

As shown in Figure 4, program participation has resulted directly in numerous benefits for E-Teacher participants. In addition to knowledge of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and increased professional confidence, two of these benefits—a global network and e-learning/online skills—are “value-added” elements that result specifically from the program’s virtual format.

Figure 4. Direct Benefits of Program Participation



Course Learning: TEFL Methods and Teaching Practices.

- More than 9 in 10 E-Teacher respondents reported that their course had “significantly” or “moderately” increased their awareness of new approaches (92%) and best practices (93%) in TEFL.
- The majority of respondents who took the top three courses—Teaching English to Young Learners (64%), Assessment (63%) and Critical Thinking (55%)—reported attaining “advanced” knowledge of their course subject;⁵ many felt that they had become experts.
- More than 6 in 10 respondents agreed that they had both gained confidence (74%) and increased ability (64%) to teach American English to a “great” or “moderate” extent.

Engagement with Global Professional Network. After participating in the program, nearly all survey respondents (98%) felt more connected to the global TEFL community. Indeed, many considered the engagement with global classmates to be one of the most valuable aspects of the course.

- Most respondents reported that their interactions with classmates had increased their awareness of TEFL practices around the world. (See fig. 5.)
- Three-quarters of respondents reported both gaining knowledge of other countries and cultures *and* increasing their students’ intercultural knowledge. (See fig. 5.)
- The majority of E-Teacher respondents have stayed in touch with former classmates (67%) and/or collaborated with them on research or other projects (55%). Many have also stayed in touch with their instructors, whether for research collaboration (23%) or to seek professional advice (39%).

Figure 5. Gaining Knowledge of Global TEFL Practices and Cultures (% of survey respondents)		
Global TEFL Practices	Learned how English is taught in other parts of the world	85%
	Learned strategies other professionals use to overcome challenges	85%
Intercultural Knowledge	Learned about other countries/cultures	74%
	Increased <i>students’</i> knowledge of other countries/cultures	74%

*Total n= Ranges from 338 to 363

†Percentages represent total of “significantly” and “somewhat” responses.

⁵ N ranges from 71 to 140.

E-Learning and Online Skills. Most E-Teacher participants agreed that their course experience had substantially increased their skills and confidence in using e-learning platforms and working with online resources. Subsequently, 60 percent of survey respondents reported incorporating more online resources into their teaching, often as a tool for interactive language learning.

Increased Professional Confidence. The word “confidence” came up repeatedly in participants’ comments about the impacts of course participation on their careers. Participants reported increased confidence in their teaching abilities and professional duties as well as a sense of empowerment or motivation to take new initiatives in their classrooms, institutions, or beyond.

Program Benefits Lead to Multiple Impacts. As illustrated in Figure 6, E-Teacher participants’ new knowledge and skills together with their global professional network and increased confidence led to impacts on their classrooms, institutions, and careers.

Participants use online resources for interactive, collaborative learning.

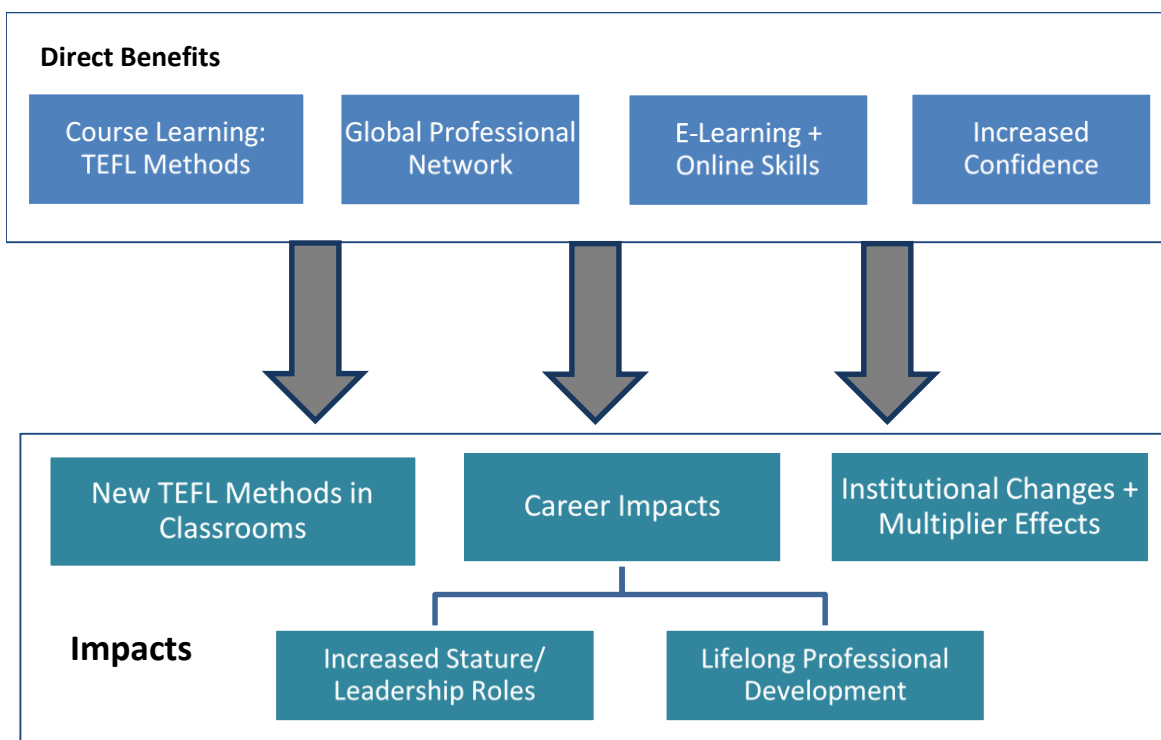
[I] introduce e-learning to my students, connect my students with English learners around the world.

—University professor, Indonesia

Through the virtual environment, they can share and develop their writing skills.

—University professor, Turkey

Figure 6. Program Benefits Lead to Impacts on E-Teachers’ Classrooms, Institutions and Careers



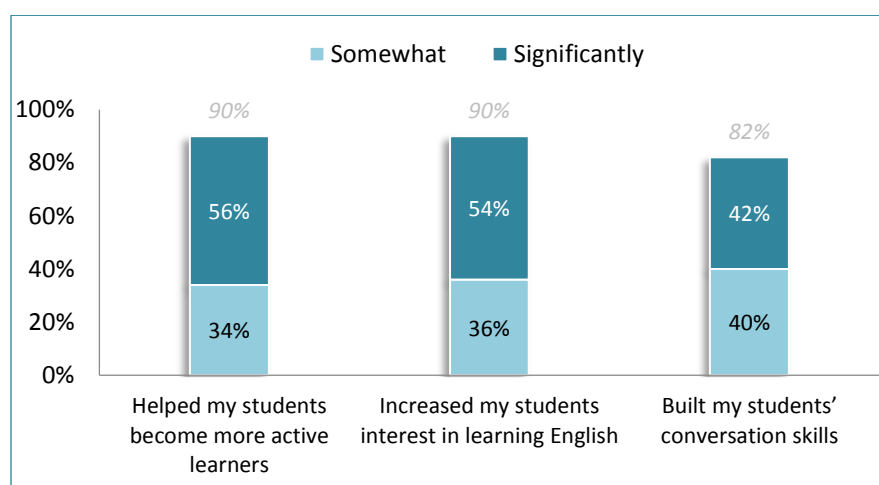
IMPACTS: APPLICATION OF TEFL METHODS IN PARTICIPANTS' CLASSROOMS



Nearly all the survey respondents (93%) felt that they had become “more effective” teachers overall as a result of the E-Teacher Program, two-thirds (64%) of them to a “great extent.” In particular, participants have implemented the following teaching methods or practices in their classrooms:

Student-Centered Teaching. Nearly all respondents (95%) reported changing from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one, which represented a major shift from prevailing teaching practices in many countries. Respondents reported that increased classroom interaction and active learning had increased students’ confidence and interest in English, as well as improved their conversation skills.

Figure 7. Students Become More Active Learners of English: E-Teacher Perceptions



* Total n= Ranges from 336 to 339.

Critical Thinking Skills. Many participants who took the Critical Thinking course found ways to incorporate critical thinking into their lesson plans or assignments, although this was sometimes challenging within their local teaching system or culture. Those who did so reported positive results for students, such as improved teacher-student relationships or improved performance on tests.

New Assessment Practices. Participants reported that gaining an expanded range of assessment techniques—such as scoring rubrics, peer assessment, and designing assignments to align with assessment—was very useful in their classes.

E-Teachers report positive results from new assessment practices.

[I use a] variety of test types with my students, implementing and adapting what I have [learned] ... and [I] find good results in my teaching.

—Primary school teacher, Yemen

[Peer assessment] gives students an awareness of the work they are doing, and all sorts of benefits.

—University professor, Chile

IMPACTS: PARTICIPANTS ATTAIN INCREASED STATURE AND LEADERSHIP ROLES



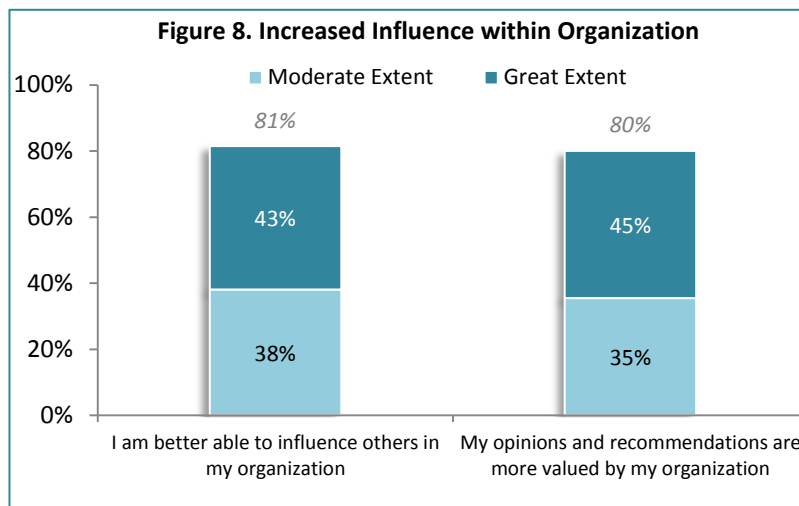
Program participation had a major impact on many participants' careers, including increased stature and/or responsibility within their home institutions, as well as new job opportunities.

Increased Stature and Influence within Institution. After completing their course, many participants reported that they were looked to as experts in their course content. Their increased stature coupled with increased professional confidence made participants more likely to assert new ideas and increased the likelihood that those ideas would influence others.

Job Changes. The majority (59%) of survey respondents reported that their E-Teacher participation had led directly to increased responsibilities in their job. In addition, many survey respondents either earned a promotion (18%) or obtained a new job (16%).

- *Leadership roles.* Most commonly, E-Teacher participants took on leadership roles, such as becoming a “coordinator” of other instructors or advising institutional leaders on curriculum.
- *Shift in focus.* Some participants—especially those who took the Assessment course—reported taking on more specialized tasks utilizing their new expertise.
- *Consulting opportunities.* A few participants in Peru noted that their E-Teacher course had led to new consulting, business, or freelance opportunities.

E-Teacher participants' higher status and increased leadership roles facilitated their ability to make changes within their institutions and to multiply the effects of their new knowledge. (See p. 8.)



*Total n= 357 and 355, respectively.

Former E-Teacher participants take on leadership roles and new jobs.

Taking the course widened my knowledge of assessment. This allowed me to participate actively in the decisions made at an institutional level on how students are assessed.

—Administrator, English language institute, Peru

[I attained] a bigger position in teaching ... Now I am the Deputy Director in Academic Affairs.

—Secondary school administrator, Thailand

IMPACTS: INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES AND MULTIPLIER EFFECTS



Many E-Teacher participants have implemented institution-wide changes to teaching practices, curricula or English language programs; some were able to multiply their new knowledge at a national level.

Sharing Knowledge with Colleagues. The majority of survey respondents shared their learning with colleagues at their home institution by sharing course materials (73%) and/or giving formal presentations or workshops (62%). Many participants reported that knowledge-sharing had led directly to other instructors applying new teaching methods.

Knowledge-sharing influences colleagues to apply new methods.

I have had the opportunity to share my E-Teacher course content with my colleagues in a seminar. ... Since then, my colleagues all try to apply content- or task-based learning.

—Classroom instructor, Ministry of Education, Burkina Faso

Institutional Impacts. Most survey respondents reported making multiple changes at their institutions as a result of the program, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Institutional Changes by E-Teacher Participants (% of survey respondents)	
Introduced new teaching practices or pedagogies	90%
Improved testing or assessment practices	83%
Taught new course on subject of E-Teacher course	79%
Introduced more online resources into existing courses	79%
Integrated e-learning into existing courses	62%
Developed or revised institution-wide curricula	54%

N= Ranges from 344 to 359

Additional findings emerged from the qualitative research:

- In terms of *new teaching practices*, E-Teacher participants most commonly introduced a critical thinking approach.
- *Curriculum changes* included integrating critical thinking, new assessment methods, methods of teaching language to children, and materials for different types of learners.
- A few participants in administrative positions were motivated by their course experience to *increase professional development opportunities* for their staff.



Multiplier Effects

Participants share their new expertise with TEFL professionals in the broader community, such as at national conferences or regional institutions. Furthermore, changes implemented by participants in TEFL training courses will likely be replicated by students in their own classrooms around the country.

Participants infuse new teaching methods into the broader TEFL community.

I have been invited at ... local institutions to conduct a few workshops on how to implement critical thinking strategies. ... I firmly believe that has made a difference in the way my peers view our profession.

—Instructor, binational center, Colombia

[The E-Teacher course led me to] arise the students' interest and involve them to a greater degree. These novice teachers (my students) implemented their newly acquired teaching practices and pedagogies in their classrooms. ...

—University professor/administrator, Israel

National Impacts

- Student-centered approach implemented in English classrooms nationwide. (Jordan)
- Creation of Web site to facilitate sharing of ideas and resources among English language teachers nationwide. (Tajikistan)
- Changes implemented by E-Teacher participants who work for their country's ministry of education⁶ may have national impacts. For example, a Ministry official in Sudan shared approaches for teaching young learners throughout his country's English teaching community, and an official in Bahrain reported integrating critical thinking into lesson plans.

National Impacts

[The E-Teacher course] was cascaded to all the English language teachers/UNRWA schools in Jordan (172 schools) at the time, and I was leading on that as ... school supervisor at the time ... planning how to change the focus of teaching to become student-centered.

—Emergency education officer, Jordan

I also developed a Web site ... to organize English clubs in different parts of Tajikistan. I continuously created lesson plans and shared with colleagues both in and outside of my home country.

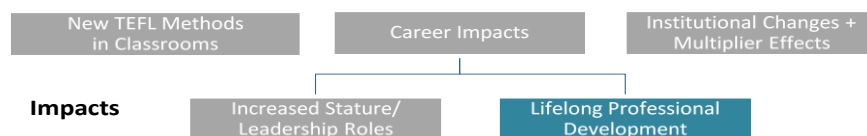
—Nonprofit administrator, Tajikistan

[I] spread the culture of TEYL [Teaching English to Young Learners] among academics, educationalists and practitioners.

—Ministry of Education official, Sudan

⁶ Approximately 5 percent of E-Teachers reported working for their national ministry or department of education at the time of the survey.

IMPACTS: PARTICIPATION SPURS LIFELONG PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



E-Teacher participants attributed high influence to their course experience in kick-starting them onto a path of lifelong learning. In fact, three-quarters (75%) of survey respondents credited the course to a “great extent” in making them more motivated to engage in professional development.

Professional Development Courses. One-third (32%) of respondents have taken more online courses or trainings (such as additional E-Teacher courses). Among this group, nearly all respondents (97%) rated their initial E-Teacher experience “extremely” or “very” valuable in preparing them for additional online programs.

As an E-Teacher scholar, I have proved to myself that an eager teacher will do everything in order to improve her craft. That continuous education of the teacher is like the usual process of breathing.
—Secondary school teacher, Philippines

Pursuing Graduate Degrees.

- The majority (70%) of survey respondents reported that the E-Teacher course had *significantly* “increased [their] confidence to take other graduate-level courses in their field.”
- Many participants were inspired by their course experience to pursue a Master’s or PhD, or even both in some cases.
- Some participants noted that their course participation *had resulted directly* in a scholarship or acceptance to a graduate program.
- Some reported that their E-Teacher course had influenced their decision of what area to specialize in or to focus on for their thesis.

E-Teacher Program participation influences graduate study.

It inspired me to continue my studies in the field, and since then I completed [my] MA in Applied English Linguistics and started [my] PhD.
—PhD student, Uzbekistan

[As a direct result of my E-Teacher participation], I got the Fulbright Scholarship and attended SIU/Carbondale.
—Teacher trainer, university, Niger

[The course was] instrumental in my decision of actually going into an assessment-related area for my PhD, because that was the first time I was forced to articulate what I thought about evaluation in a formal way.
—University professor, Chile

Other Career Opportunities. E-Teacher participants also reported other types of professional activities and accomplishments that resulted from their course participation.

- Participating in professional associations and conference.
- Publishing professional articles or books.
- Giving presentations on the subject of their E-Teacher course.